DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 359 862 HE 026 550

AUTHOR	Johnson, Reid
TITLE	South Carolina Higher Education Assessment (SCHEA) Project. Final Report.
INSTITUTION	South Carolina Higher Education Assessment Network, Rock Hill.
SPONS AGENCY	Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	[92]
CONTRACT	P116B80923
NOTE	41p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Accreditation (Institutions); Accrediting Agencies; *Cooperative Programs; Coordination; *Educational Assessment; Educational Quality; *Higher Education; Institutional Cooperation; *Institutional Evaluation; Program Descriptions; Public Colleges; *Regional Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*South Carolina

ABSTRACT

A consortium of South Carolina colleges and universities developed assessment programs which would fully satisfy state and accreditation assessment mandates and increase program quality and institutional effectiveness. A South Carolina Higher Education Assessment Network was established with a Coordinating Center at Winthrop College to provide organizational and technical assistance for member institutions, manage Network services and activities, and collect and produce assessment resource materials. The project itself featured 10 ongoing objectives: (1) formation of the Network; (2) organization of a state advisory board; (3) conduction of a needs assessment for member institutions; (4) organization of core groups of assessment leaders on member campuses; (5) holding an annual Statewide Assessment Conference; (6) establishment of an assessment clearinghouse and technical assistance center; (7) publication of a Network newsletter; (8) creation of an assessment primer; (9) dissemination of the primer; and (10) publication and dissemination of information on the Network to media, professional organizations, and the institutions outside the Network. All goals with the exception of the fourth one were accomplished with high degrees of participation and satisfaction by members. By the end of the program implementation period, the Network had 42 institutional and agency members including all 33 public colleges and universities in the state. Project Director comments are appended. (JB)

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ED359862

FINAL REPORT TO FIPSE

FOR THE

SOUTH CAROLINA HIGHER EDUCATION ASSESSMENT (SCHEA) PROJECT

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COVER SHEET

Grantee Organization:

Winthrop College
Office of Assessment
701 Oakland Avenue
Rock Hill, SC 29733

Grant Number: P116B80923

Project Dates:

Starting Date:	August 1, 1988
Ending Date:	July 31, 1991
Number of Months:	36

Project Director:

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Office of Assessment
210 Tillman Hall
Winthrop College
Rock Hill, SC 29733
Telephone: (803) 323-2341

FIPSE Program Officers:

Constance Cook and Louis Greenstein

Grant Award:

Year 1	$ 51,770
Year 2	$ 51,770
Year 3	$ 51,770
Total	$155,310

Project Summary

The South Carolina Higher Education Assessment (SCHEA) Project accomplished three primary goals: (1) the organization of a 40 member, statewide consortium of colleges, universities, and state agencies (the SCHEA Network) working together to implement the letter and spirit of assessment mandates, as quickly, inexpensively, and effectively as possible; (2) the establishment of the SCHEA Network Coordinating Center at Winthrop College to provide organizational, informational, and technical assistance to member institutions, conduct Network activities, and produce original assessment related publications and other resource materials; and (3) the creation of a "primer" manual (A Beginner's Guide to Higher Education Assessment) to help orient newcomers to the major issues, models, options, and obstacles involved in implementing a high quality assessment program. We conduct an annual higher education assessment conference, publish a newsletter (The SCHEA eXchange), produce resource materials (e.g., An Annotated Bibliography of Higher Education Assessment Literature: 1980-1990, A Critical Review of Student Outcomes Assessment Options, etc.), and provide other forms of technical, consultative, and information assistance to institutions both inside and outside the SCHEA Network.

For further information contact: Dr. Reid Johnson, SCHEA Network Coordinator, 210 Tillman Hall, Winthrop College, Rock Hill, SC 29733. Phone: (803) 323-2341 Fax: (803) 328-2855
The SCHEA Project has produced over 30 written products, reports, and other resource materials.

Executive Summary

Project Title: South Carolina Higher Education Assessment (SCHEA) Project

Grantee: Office of Assessment, 210 Tillman Hall, Winthrop College, Rock Hill, SC 29733

Project Director: Dr. Reid Johnson (803) 323-2341

A. Project Overview

The SCHEA Project was begun to help a consortium of South Carolina colleges and universities (the SCHEA Network) develop assessment programs which would fully satisfy state and accreditor assessment mandates and increase program quality and institutional effectiveness. A Network Coordinating Center was established at Winthrop College to provide organizational and technical assistance for member institutions, manage Network services and activities, and collect and produce assessment resource materials. Over the course of the FIPSE project, the SCHEA Network grew from 20 to 40 member institutions, and continues today under local and state funding.

B. Purpose

The primary purposes of the SCHEA Project were to establish cooperative and even collaborative relationships for assessment activities among a group of colleges and universities largely unprepared for the challenges of assessment, and whose histories were marked by internecine competition. By providing assessment orientation and support services, and being available for follow-through trouble shooting over the years, we hoped to enable Network members to implement better assessment programs, faster and less expensively than they could have accomplished by themselves.

C. Background and Origins

The SCHEA Network and Coordinating Center were conceived and created by a few administrators and psychology department faculty members at Winthrop College who not only foresaw the inevitability of the higher education assessment movement, but understood also the tremendous potential for institutional enhancement and program reform it contained, if it were implemented properly. Their willingness to assume a leadership position in the state, commit very limited institutional resources to assessment, and sacrifice a possible competitive edge to establish a sharing relationship with other South Carolina colleges and universities, made the SCHEA Project possible. With low levels of funding support, generally poor reputations for educational quality, the prevalence of cut-throat competition, and generally negative attitudes

regarding assessment mandates, prospects for the project's success were still not favorable.

D. Project Description

The SCHEA Project featured ten ongoing objectives: (1) Formation and maintenance of the SCHEA Network assessment consortium among at least 12 higher education institutions; (2) Organization of a SCHEA Network State Advisory Board made up of assessment decision-makers from member colleges and state agencies; (3) Conduction of a needs assessment for member institutions' assessment support priorities; (4) Organization of core groups of assessment leaders on member campuses called Assessment Liaison Teams (ALTs); (5) Initiation and coordination of an annual statewide higher education assessment conference; (6) Establishment of an Assessment Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Center in the Coordinator's Office at Winthrop; (7) To publish a SCHEA Network newsletter; (8) Creation of an "assessment primer" A Beginner's Guide for SCHEA Network members to help orient them to the basic issues, options, opportunities, and potential pitfalls involved in planning, designing, implementing, analyzing, evaluating, and applying the results from a high quality higher education assessment program; (9) Dissemination of the Beginner's Guide and other assessment-related products to SCHEA Network members via consultations, presentations, workshops, retreats, original publications, and other means; and (10) To publicize and disseminate information on SCHEA Network activities to the public, media, professional organizations, and other colleges and universities outside the Network.

E. Project Results

With the exception of the ALTs in Objective 4, all SCHEA Project goals were accomplished at or above criteria, on time, within budget, and with high degrees of participation and satisfaction by Network members. By the end of the FIPSE Grant period in July, 1991, the SCHEA Network had 42 institutional and agency members, including all 33 public colleges and universities in the state. We had held 12 Advisory Board meetings, including three workshops and one two-day retreat. Initial and ongoing needs assessments were being responded to through dozens of phone "hotline" contacts, a lending library of assessment resource materials, and on-campus consultations. Three SCHEA Assessment Conferences had drawn over 500 participants from Network institutions and six other states. Six issues of The SCHEA eXchange newsletter had been printed and disseminated to over 4000 readers. The Beginner's Guide and other SCHEA publications (including An Annotated Bibliography of Higher Education Assessment Literature - 1980-90, and A Critical Review of Student Outcomes Assessment Options, among others) had been produced and disseminated by mail and direct presentation to over a dozen state, regional, national, and international audiences. And as of

1991, the SCHEA Network was receiving more requests for assistance and materials than we were making.

F. Summary and Conclusions

By the end of our FIPSE Project, the SCHEA Network had become a large and dynamic consortium, a major participant in ongoing state policy and procedure decisions regarding higher education assessment and institutional effectiveness, and a recognized leader and contributor to high quality assessment practices at the regional and national level. (The Network continues full operation on state grant and institutional fee funds for the 1991-92 academic year.)

G. Appendix

The SCHEA Project has produced some thirty documents which it is pleased to share on a copy cost or maintenance fee basis, including organizational documents (e.g., membership lists, committee charges, conference programs, evaluation forms, etc.), project reports, and assessment-related publications. (See Appendix of full FIPSE Report for more complete list of products.)

A/B. Project Overview and Purpose

The problems the SCHEA Project was designed to address took several forms at several levels. The higher education assessment movement was sweeping the country, and both our state government and SACS regional accrediting agencies were promulgating mandates requiring colleges and universities to assess their effectiveness. No extra funding was provided, of course. South Carolina - with its history of relatively low economic and public support for higher education, its general lack of recognition for high quality colleges and universities, and its tradition of cut-throat internecine competition at the post-secondary level - was poorly prepared to take on this new challenge, much less take advantage of it.

There were few signs for optimism at the institutional level, either. Although the first AAHE National Assessment Conference in 1985 was held in Columbia, S.C., no significant momentum was gained. On the contrary, with the possible exceptions of the major universities and a few private institutions, the large majority of South Carolina colleges were entering the assessment era underfunded, overworked, and viewing assessment requirements as yet one more bureaucratic burden to bear. Outside resources were also apparently few. With no national journal of higher education assessment, a limited and extremely widely dispersed assessment literature, and most advanced knowledge residing in a few pioneering institutions already in their second decade of assessment activities, prospects for smooth or steady progress toward quality assessment by South Carolina's colleges were bleak.

Program-level problems in the front lines were many, as were questions,...with few answers for either. What were the practical implications of the assessment mandates, in terms of new activities and costs? What models of assessment programs were available? How were assessment programs to be planned and designed? What were administrator and faculty roles? What assessment methodological options should be used? What were the relative advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses, boons and pitfalls associated with different assessment program decisions? How could full student cooperation be attained? What kinds of results could be expected, and how interpreted? And most important to the entire endeavor, how could assessment results best be utilized for educational program improvement? Individual colleges and universities trying to deal with these and other assessment challenges and opportunities on their own faced a truly daunting task.

In trying to attack these problems, the purposes of the SCHEA Project were conceptualized at several levels. Generally, we wanted to try to turn the potential liabilities of assessment into assets. The main goal was to help enable at least twelve South Carolina colleges and universities to realize benefits from the higher education assessment movement - and its concomitant state and accreditor assessment mandates - as quickly, inexpensively, and with as few problems as possible. More specifically, the Project sought to (1) organize a consortium of institutions dedicated to cooperation and mutual support efforts in assessment, (2) establish a coordinating center at Winthrop College to provide

organizational leadership and informational and technical assistance, and (3) create a "primer" manual to help orient colleges to the issues, models, methodological options, and potential pitfalls of implementing a higher education assessment program. We hoped that by helping a core group of institutions save time and money in their start-up efforts and being readily available for ongoing assessment program support, a positive momentum could be begun and maintained which would benefit the whole state.

C. Background and Origins

In 1986-87, two Winthrop College administrators, President Martha Kime Piper and Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Smith, were among the first in our region to perceive the oncoming higher education assessment movement and mandates noted in the previous section, and appreciate the potential impact assessment could have on Winthrop and other South Carolina colleges and universities. After review of some available literature, consultation with several Winthrop faculty - particularly Drs. Roger Baumgarte, Reid Johnson, and Joseph Prus of the psychology department - and contact with assessors from pioneer institutions such as Northeast Missouri State University, it was decided to submit a proposal to the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) for a Step 12 grant. (Step 12 is a competitive funding category available to public institutions for support of programs not addressed elsewhere in the state higher education budget formula.) That proposal sought $100,000 to establish Winthrop as a "lead assessment institution," with four primary objectives: (1) to conduct an extensive historical review of higher education assessment models and practices; (2) to adopt, adapt, or design practical assessment methods and "pilot test" them at Winthrop; (3) to share the lessons learned and results of these pilot efforts with public institutions throughout the state so others could profit from our experiences, and (4) to establish an Office of Assessment in the Academic Affairs division to provide leadership and coordination for these efforts.

To some, Winthrop had no obvious qualifications to mount such an ambitious project. Originally chartered as a teacher's college over 100 years ago, Winthrop was until 1974 the state women's college of the public higher education system. Enrollment declines and decreased demands for majors in education, home economics, and music, which were Winthrop's primary graduates, spurred the College to begin a transition to the co-ed comprehensive college it has become today. Still, in 1987 Winthrop was a relatively small institution, tucked up in corner of the state, with no distinctive mission or constituency; very much in the middle of the pack among southeastern colleges - which is hardly a leading group nationally.

And yet Winthrop was not without its assets. Its 5,000 student size and 80+ graduate and undergraduate programs gave it much in common with the state's larger universities, yet the student profiles and faculty loads and functions were essentially the same as the smaller senior colleges. Thus, lessons learned at Winthrop could be expected to generalize well to most other public institutions. Also importantly, Winthrop's administrative leadership was ready to commit support and resources to a worthy project, despite potential risks and unknown bottom lines. In terms of campus resources, faculty from the School Psychology Program and other departments were proving to be very knowledgeable and experienced in issues which were keys to successful higher education assessment. And lastly, even Winthrop's historical lack of success in the fierce competitions

for limited public higher education funds became an advantage, since we had established fewer rivalries and were perceived as less of a threat by the other state colleges.

Winning the Step 12 grant enabled the Winthrop leadership to pursue our "education" in higher education assessment with increased vigor. One of our earliest major discoveries was that many of the country's more innovative and successful assessment activities were being sponsored by FIPSE grants, and furthermore, personnel from these FIPSE programs were unusually communicative and willing to share the benefits of their work. We also discovered that we had significantly underestimated the actual costs of establishing a first-rate assessment program at Winthrop, since the college programs to which we aspired consistently reported annual expenditures of $200,000-300,000 per year. Lastly, we began to see the potential in South Carolina for something more comprehensive and ambitious than the "lead institution" model envisioned in our Step 12 plan. We wanted to explore the idea of a statewide assessment consortium.

Vice-President Mike Smith and Grants Director Kevin McCarthy initiated and assumed the leadership of an effort to mount a FIPSE proposal to establish a higher education assessment consortium in South Carolina, with Winthrop as its sponsoring institution and coordinating center. Building on the Step 12 grant and funds and resources already committed by Winthrop, the FIPSE request was seen as a natural and synergistic keystone to the combination of needs and resources at that crucial juncture in our state's higher educational development.

D. **Project Description:**

As was suggested in the earlier sections, the main feature of Winthrop's 1987 FIPSE proposal was the organization and operation of a statewide consortium, eventually named the South Carolina Higher Education Assessment (SCHEA) Network, with Winthrop as its coordinating host institution. In addition to the assessment resource center and pilot-testing functions featured in the Step 12 grant, three primary objectives were involved in the FIPSE request: (1) to create an organizational framework and establish reciprocal agreements among a consortial group of at least a dozen colleges and universities across the state; (2) to develop an exportable Assessment Process Model primer to help institutions just beginning their programs to get oriented to the task; and (3) to establish an "assessment laboratory" at Winthrop, where research studies evaluating the validity of existing and proposed assessment methods would be conducted.

This report will emphasize SCHEA Network activities and results, but some elaboration on objectives two and three is warranted. During our initial assessment-related study and travel which introduced us to FIPSE, consortia, and the high costs of assessment, we were also struck by two other facts. First, the large majority of higher educators who were to perform the brunt of assessment activities on their campuses had little or no training or experience in assessment! To most, assessment was an alien, mysterious, and even threatening prospect; one which they faced with apprehension, and even fear and loathing. Many if not most of their concerns seemed to be based on lack of information

or misinformation about assessment. We therefore believed there was a great need for a succinct but practical process model "primer" document developed especially for higher educator "beginners" which could orient those educators to the basic assessment process and address common questions and problems. This "Beginner's Guide to Higher Education Assessment" was conceived of as a dynamic model, which would grow and evolve over the course of the project as broader constituencies were served and additional needs were identified.

As for the assessment laboratory idea, our early explorations also revealed another surprising and disturbing finding. It was that widespread reliance in higher education assessment was being placed on measurement models and strategies whose validity for this purpose was greatly suspect, at best (namely, value-added models, and such methods as multiple-choice norm-referenced group tests, and written survey questionnaires). We therefore included a plan for the systematic investigation of these and other methods in our original proposal. Unfortunately, when our funding request was cut by slightly more than a third, we were constrained to cut back on the scope of our project. Since the "lab" was one of the more expensive and less direct of our proposed services, we requested and received FIPSE permission to delete this objective from our project.

The SCHEA Network began with a written invitation for participation to all 33 public post-secondary institutions and a dozen private colleges and universities in South Carolina. Twenty-five institutions accepted; 10 public four-year schools, 13

two-year technical colleges, and two private schools. A second round of invitations was issued for the SCHEA Network's organizational meeting, which was held October 7-8, 1988 at Winthrop. Counting representative from two-year campuses of the University of South Carolina system, and special invitations to members of the staffs of the S.C. Commission on Higher Education (CHE) and the State Board for Comprehensive and Technical Education, twenty members were expected at the first meeting, and sixteen attended.

This initial gathering was marked by three characteristics which have become hallmark strengths of the SCHEA Network Project. First, there were very candid, sometimes painfully frank status reports on each institution's assessment efforts, with little of the posturing and euphemistic double-talk traditionally prevalent at such events. Second, a needs assessment begun before the meeting produced clear priorities for SCHEA services and activities, which got planning off to an unusually good start. And third, despite the natural competitions and conflicts among the representatives' institutions, the attendees gradually established a spirit of group comraderie and cohesion which has persisted through the project.

It quickly became apparent from the institutional reports and needs assessments that the technical assistance services originally planned for the first year were premature. Most SCHEA Network institutions were not only <u>not</u> ready to begin implementing comprehensive assessment programs, they were not even ready to <u>plan</u> the implementation of comprehensive assessment programs. The

administrative climate for assessment was ambivalent at best, with faculty attitudes mostly ranging from uninformed to hostile. Thus, a rapid overhaul of activities in the Network Coordinator's Office was performed, and our service emphasis shifted from technical assistance on assessment methods to informational and motivational assistance for a predominantly neutral-to-negative audience of higher educators.

Ten first year objectives were addressed, and a summary of SCHEA Network activities and services for 1988-89 follows:

1. Formation of the Network: Continuous recruiting efforts and publicity for SCHEA activities resulted in additions to the dozen charter members noted in our proposal. By the end of our first year, Network membership stood at 34: 11 of the 12 public senior institutions, 19 of the 21 public 2-year colleges, two private schools, and representatives from CHE and the Tech System Board. (An expected split-off of the 16-member technical college system to form their own separate network did not occur due to the mutual affinity of purpose and activities developed within the SCHEA group.)
2. Organization of the SCHEA Network State Advisory Board. A twenty-member planning and coordinating body was formed made up of two representatives from the Technical College system, one representative from each of the other 16 colleges and universities, one from CHE, and the Coordinator. This group met four times the first year in one to one and one half day sessions to conduct the Network's business, evaluate progress,

and plan future activities. All meetings were productive and attended by at least 16 members.

3. Initial Needs Assessment of Member Institutions. As was previously noted, a needs assessment was the first official service performed by the Coordinator's office and resulted in the planning and prioritizing of the remaining activities in this summary.

4. Organization of Assessment Liaison Teams (ALTs) at Member Institutions. As originally conceived, most of the technical and consultative assistance would be provided at an intermediate level between the SCHEA Advisory Board representatives and their faculties, called ALTs. ALTs were to be teams of 3-10 educators from each campus who would be most involved in actual assessment implementation on a day-to-day basis; i.e., each assessment program's front-line troops and top sergeants. Due to the Network members' very early stages of development in assessment, the ALT idea proved premature, and although efforts to form ALTs took place on ten campuses, no significant role for these teams ever developed - either on their home campuses or through the SCHEA Network - and the ALT objective was dropped as unnecessary in the second year.

5. Annual Statewide Assessment Conference. Originally envisioned as a nice vehicle for both information dissemination and showcasing members' assessment efforts, the first SCHEA Conference became instead the most critical informational and attitudinal activity of the first year - and perhaps all three years - of the project. Considerable efforts were required to

get even a token turnout from most institutions due to the still prevalent recalcitrance regarding assessment on the part of most South Carolina higher educators. If significant numbers had not attended, or had attended and left as negative as they had come, the SCHEA Network could well have shrunk to just a handful of more progressive institutions, or perhaps collapsed altogether. Fortunately, intensive recruiting efforts by most Advisory Board members attracted over 120 participants from thirty institutions. The resulting attendee evaluations indicated consistently positive responses to the conference program, and most institutions look back on the conference as the "watershed" event that helped pull their faculty over the hump toward commitment to assessment program implementation. Considerable credit for these positive outcomes must also go to the outstanding corps of national speakers featured at that meeting: Pat Hutchings (AAHE), Tom Moran (SUNY-Plattsburg), Georgene Loacker and Judeen Schultee (Alverno), Bob Thorndike (Western Washington), and Tony Golden (Austin Peay).

6. Establish an Assessment Clearinghouse and Provide Technical Assistance to Network Members. As has previously been described, Network priority shifts sharply curtailed some Coordinator's Office activities and increased the need for others. Only five requests for technical consultations were received during the first year, and our rapid-response "Technical Assistance Hotline" phone only responded to twenty calls, with most of those coming after the March conference.

On the other hand, assessment clearinghouse activities, especially the development of materials tailored to SCHEA needs, were underway at a high level. Coordinator's office staff selected, reviewed, evaluated, annotated, catalogued, and printed over 200 references from the higher education literature and special purpose publications. We also begged, borrowed, or bought samples and specimen sets of some 50 different higher education instruments and methods, and established a Lending Library of literary and assessment materials for SCHEA members.

7. Network Newsletter. As with the annual conference, the newsletter objective became a higher priority, but shifted from a technical exchange and showcase function to more motivational and educational purposes. Two issues of The SCHEA eXchange were published. Each ran over 10,000 words and was designed to project a positive and educationally relevant image of higher education assessment. Both newsletters were very well received by Network members. Five hundred copies of the first issue were printed, and a supplementary run of 100 black-and-white copies was also needed to meet demands. The second issue went to seven hundred readers.

8. Generation of the Basic Process Model. Development of the basic assessment process model proceeded rapidly during 1988-89. A first draft "concept model" was written in August and September, and presented initially at the Charlotte Area Educational Consortium (CAEC) Assessment Conference in late September. A change in title to "A Beginner's Guide to Higher

Education Assessment (For Beginners and Non-Beginners") was done to more clearly communicate the purpose of the work, and to avoid negative associations many beginners had to what they considered jargonistic terms like "process" and "model." Two revisions based on audience and network member feedback were completed during that first year.

9. Dissemination of the Process Model. Dissemination efforts got off to a good start. The Beginner's Guide was presented and very well received in four forums. In addition to the CAEC Conference, oral presentations were also made at the SCHEA Conference and by invitation at the Fourth AAHE National Assessment Conference in Atlanta. The latter session, with co-presenter and SCHEA Network member Joe Prus, drew an overflow audience of 200+ participants. A five part written series of Beginner's Guide columns in The SCHEA eXchange newsletter was also begun.

10. Professional and Public Dissemination of Network Activities. While sharing of **The SCHEA Network Annotated Bibliography of Higher Education Assessment Literature** and **Lending Library of Assessment Resource Materials Catalogue** was restricted to members-only during our first year, dissemination efforts were also made for other public and professional audiences. Although only two SCHEA Conference sessions were by local presenters (and those were by Network staff), SCHEA Network activities were presented at six local, state, national, and international conferences (i.e., the Charlotte Area Educational Consortium Assessment Conference, the South

Carolina Association for Institutional Research Conference, the South Carolina Technical College System's "Assessment Kickoff" Conference, the FIPSE National Project Directors' Meeting, the AAHE National Assessment Conference, and the International Seminar on the Assessment of Quality in Higher Education at Cambridge, England). And in addition to limited public dissemination of The SCHEA eXchange newsletter, SCHEA Network and member institution assessment efforts were featured in thirteen radio, newspaper, and higher education publications, several of which were picked up for statewide or regional wire service distribution.

Progress on all objectives continued through the second and third years of the SCHEA Project, although sometimes with needs-based modifications. Those activities are now summarized in narrative form.

Network membership remained constant during the 1989-90 academic year, despite inquiries from other institutions, based on a vote by the charter members. (The consensus seemed to be that SCHEA membership had now been earned and was too valuable to be given away to schools who had taken a wait-and-see attitude initially.) When requests for new memberships persisted, the Board relented, and we welcomed eight new members - three public and five private - in the summer of 1990. Membership in 1990-91 thus reached 42, and included all 33 public colleges and universities, seven private institutions, and two state agencies.

Needs assessments have become virtually continuous, with "Hotline" contacts on a daily basis, Advisory Board reports quarterly, and annual written needs evaluations. Open and free communication has been a strength of Network maintenance.

SCHEA Advisory Board meeting agendas have undergone significant change over three years. Initially, meeting time was spent primarily in information exchange, organizational planning, and rapport building. During the second year, one-half day of each board meeting was devoted to workshops for board members on a variety of assessment strategy topics given by the Coordinator's Office staff. Toward the end of the second year, a committee structure was created, and third year board meetings were increasingly devoted to planning and evaluation of specific activities via committee reports. In order to continue to serve the professional development needs of Advisory Board members, spring board meetings were expanded to two day retreats, which included a day long workshop experience on a current assessment topic selected by the board. The May, 1991 workshop was on assessing students' personal (non-academic) development during their college experience, and was conducted by Dr. George Kuh of the University of Indiana.

As was previously noted, the original ALT objective died a natural death from "need starvation" during the project's second year. Simultaneously, however, a replacement concept took hold which addressed the original purposes of the ALTs in a more practical manner, and which involved as many or more SCHEA institution higher educators than was originally planned. This

took the form of "Mini-Networks," renamed Academic Area Assessment Networks (AAANs) near the end of the third year. AAANs are multicampus interest groups drawn from higher educators in common academic programs or having common assessment strategy needs or interests. AAANs meet as needed - but at least twice each year, including once at the SCHEA Conference - to share assessment experiences unique to their interest area, learn about "model" or innovative assessment strategies, and plan collaborative activities. Begun with fewer than a dozen members in 1990, there are now 14 AAAN groups with over 200 members. This promises to be one of the most positive legacies of the SCHEA network project for years to come.

The Second and Third Annual SCHEA Assessment Conferences built on the strong initial meeting with larger and better programs and higher attendance. Nationally prominent speakers featured on SCHEA programs have included Alexander Astin (UCLA), Barbara Wright and Ted Marchese (AAHE), Jack Sites (SACS), Chris Hebron (England), Frank Luth (James Madison), Clifford Adelman (U.S.D.E. Office of Research), Marvin Peterson (NCRPTAL-Michigan), Gary Pike (Tennessee-Knoxville), Ted Miller and Roger Winston (Georgia), Jerry Martin (NEH), and Constance Cook (FIPSE), as well as teams from leading assessment programs such as Alverno College, Kean College, and Clayton State. The third year conference was a three day affair, with 30 sessions, over 200 participants, and presentations by eight SCHEA Network member programs. (Thirty-two of 1991's 40 conference presenters will be from within the Network!)

Coordinator's Office clearinghouse activities have also continued to increase with the revising and supplementing of first year materials, and creation of more original resources. The Annotated Bibliography has grown to over 700 references, and a new computer software program allows faster and clearer incorporation of new materials and better cross-indexing of entries. The SCHEA Lending Library numbers over 120 specimen sets and samples of assessment materials. Another major publication, "A Critical Review of Higher Education Assessment Options" was added in the second year, and sample "Preliminary Assessment Plans for Student Development Objectives" in the third. Technical and information assistance requests have markedly increased, resulting in hundreds of "Hotline" responses and over a dozen campus workshops, presentations, and consultations for SCHEA member institutions.

1990-91 also marked the culmination of a two-year national research project involving Winthrop's Office of Assessment and the American Council on Education. This Higher Education Panel survey resulted in publication of the monograph "Assessing Assessment: The First In-depth Study of the Higher Education Assessment Movement," which was also presented by a SCHEA member at the AAHE Conference in San Francisco. While not FIPSE supported, this study clearly built on expertise and resources growing out of the SHCEA Project.

Six issues of The SCHEA eXchange newsletter have now been printed and disseminated, with the length growing to twelve pages, and "subscription list" to over twelve hundred. SCHEA member submissions have also increased.

Like virtually all other aspects of the SCHEA Network, the Beginner's Guide model continued to develop and mature throughout the term of the FIPSE project. In addition to the "long" version serially presented in five SCHEA eXchange columns, a "Condensed Version" and "Workshop Version" of the Guide have also been produced. The full-day Beginner's Guide Workshop has become a staple fixture at the start of AAHE's National Assessment Conference, having been very well received by turn-away audiences in Washington and San Francisco the past two years.

Professional and public dissemination of SCHEA Network products, services, and activities has probably been the single area of greatest growth in the past two years. In addition to over a dozen presentations at state, regional, and national conferences other than the SCHEA Conference - include AAHE, the Southern and National Association of Institutional Researchers' Conferences, the Southeastern Psychological Association, American Association of Student Services Personnel, and the aforementioned International Seminar in England - we have responded to over 200 phone and mail requests for SCHEA reports and publications from nearly all fifty states and six foreign countries. In fact, in our third year the SCHEA Coordinator's Office passed a milestone when we actually sent out more materials than we ordered.

By the end of our FIPSE Project in the summer of 1991, the SCHEA Network had become a major resource to its member institutions, an integral component in the state's plan to increase the effectiveness of South Carolina higher education, and a significant source of information and technical assistance for

higher education assessment programs throughout the nation, and beyond. Ted Marchese, Vice-President of AAHE, described the SCHEA Network as "The best state assessment consortium in the country, and one more states should emulate." And Peter Ewell's "From the States" column in the October, 1991 Assessment Update features the SCHEA Network as ". . . far more effectively promoting the kinds of inter-campus collaboration and problem-solving most likely to lead to effective institutional practice" in assessment, and ". . . certainly an approach worth greater scrutiny" by other states.

E. Project Results

Although improved student learning and development are most certainly the ultimate outcome to which all SCHEA Network activities are dedicated, systematic student change results are long term goals beyond the temporal limits of the FIPSE Project. It is more appropriate to consider the primary short-term targets and beneficiaries to be the faculty and administrators of the SCHEA Network institutions. Our premise is that positive change in South Carolina higher educators and their assessment practices is a most effective way to improve educational programs and policies at their colleges, thus enhancing their students' learning experiences.

As should be expected from an assessment project, evaluation of our strategies, services, and activities has been a prominent component of the SCHEA Network from the outset, and has been woven throughout the fabric of all our efforts. Since project goals have been aimed primarily at changing educators' attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviors, our data base includes evaluation ratings and narratives from participants and service recipients, as well as quantitative and qualitative evidence of changes in abilities and actions on the part of SCHEA members and constituents.

Specific data sources consist of summative and formative evaluations of all SCHEA Project objectives and staff performance, by both institutional representatives and outside consultants; evaluations of conferences, workshops, presentations, and other SCHEA activities by participants; demand and satisfaction counts

by SCHEA Network and outside consumers; and changes in the quantity and quality of SCHEA higher educator assessment-related efforts, including disseminations. (Much of this has already been reported in Section D, and more is summarized in the accompanying table)

Arguably, the dedication of participants and member institutions to continue pursuing SCHEA objectives beyond FIPSE's funding limit, and our ability to attract substantial support for continuation activities, is an important type of program evaluation, too. We are very pleased to report that the SCHEA Network has continued to function this year at essentially the same level despite the termination of FIPSE support. New financing has been obtained from two sources. Funds equivalent to 78.5% of the annual FIPSE grant have been won for 1991-92 through a CHE grant competition, and a renewal application for 1992-93 has already been submitted and passed preliminary review. Additionally, a Network membership fee structure has been implemented for all SCHEA institutions and agencies, and we're especially proud of the fact that only two institutions - one two-year and one four-year college - have discontinued participation. (Annual fees are $1,000 for research universities and systems, $500 for senior institutions and agencies, and $200 for two-year colleges.) With the combination of those fees, the CHE grant, and continued financial and resource support from Winthrop College, we hope to be able to continue SCHEA Network activities unabated; all this despite the worst higher educational fiscal crisis in the state's history.

Additional quantitative data is found in the number of scholarly dissemination achievements (i.e., presentations, papers, articles, etc.) by SCHEA members, and the number of requests for SCHEA Network services and resources.

Finally, important qualitative evidence regarding the effectiveness of the SCHEA Network project was obtained from outside consultants retained for project evaluation purposes. These evaluators were chosen for their expertise in higher education assessment, their repute as consultants, and/or their successful experience with FIPSE projects. Our first external evaluations were conducted during site visits in May, 1989 by Dr. Frank Luth, first director of the widely respected assessment program at James Madison University, and Dr. Ansley Abraham of the Southern Regional Education Board, an expert in educational needs and resources. In his report Dr. Luth evaluated the SCHEA Network's first year as "excellent," noting Network organization and management achievements, the SCHEA conference and newsletter, and our symbiotic relationship with the Commission on Higher Education as particular strengths. Dr. Abraham's report was equally positive, and he complimented the project's planning, organization, thoroughness, commitment, and quality as "genuinely impressive." Consultative evaluations and suggestions were also obtained from two other nationally renowned assessment leaders - Dr. Pat Hutchings, Director of AAHE's Assessment Forum, and Dr. Thomas Moran, Vice Chancellor and FIPSE Project Director at SUNY-Plattsburg. Dr. Hutchings was extremely supportive of our activities and services, particularly the efforts toward

translating our program improvement, student-oriented philosophy into practical assessment methods which would satisfy accountability mandates as well. Dr. Moran's professional experiences were perhaps closest to those aspired to by our project. Thus, his description of the SCHEA Network as "a very effective resource . . . (which) is a key to what will likely happen in higher education in South Carolina in the next couple of years" was especially gratifying, and prophetic.

Our 1990 external project evaluator was Dr. Barbara Wright, former FIPSE Project Director at the University of Connecticut and new Director of AAHE's Assessment Forum succeeding Pat Hutchings. Dr. Wright described the Network as "eminently successful," observed that it had ". . . touched and changed the 'deep structures' of higher education in South Carolina," and concluded that "the SCHEA Project is an outstanding success in terms of both its 'products' and 'processes'." Also, in what we consider her most flattering conclusion, she states, "Approximately forty-nine other states need a network like this!"

As these representative quotes indicate, the SCHEA Project looked as good or better from an outside perspective as it did from the inside.

SCHEA PROJECT
EVALUATION DATA SUMMARY

Data Sources *(All evaluation ratings are on a 6-point scale, where 6 = excellent, 4 = good, and 1 = very poor.)*	**Results** 1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
SCHEA Network Membership	20	34	42
Advisory Board Meetings	4	4	4
- Attendance ($\bar{X}$% per meeting)	86%	83%	81%
- Participation (Conferences, retreats, etc.)	90+%	90%	86%
- Meeting evaluations ($\bar{X}$ rating)	5.73	5.41	5.59
Project Evaluations by Board Members	5.67	5.65	5.34
- SCHEA Activities ($\bar{X}$ rating)	5.63	5.56	5.58
- SCHEA Services ($\bar{X}$ rating)	5.07	5.23	5.18
- SCHEA Staff ($\bar{X}$ rating)	5.80	5.85	5.69
Needs Assessment Satisfaction	5.23	5.24	5.06
Inter-Campus Collaborations	3	7	16
- Evaluation/Satisfaction	NQ*	NQ*	5.05
SCHEA Conference Attendance	121	201	212
- Overall Attendee Evaluation	5.02	5.14	5.18
- Number of SCHEA Members Presenting	2	8	20 (1991=32)
SCHEA Coor. Center Services Requests:			
- From Network Members	25	65	100+
- From Outside the Network	3	40	100+
SCHEA Publications and Documents	4.91	4.94	4.76
- Total Bibliographies/Materials Collected	270	500+	850+
- Requests for Publications/Documents	26	80	100+
SCHEA eXchange Newsletter Evaluation	5.73	5.59	5.39
- Number disseminated	1300	2400	3000+
Beginner's Guide Presentations (hours)	2(3)	4(7)	4(14)
- Consumer Evaluation ($\bar{X}$ rating)	5.81	5.56	NQ*
Other SCHEA Center Contacts	23	68	100+

*No quantified measure obtained

F. Summary and Conclusions

Most of the insights gleaned from the first three years of our SCHEA Project have been alluded to in earlier sections, but the major ones can be summarized here as follows:

1. Assessment Works! Virtually every program which has tried to implement highly valid assessment has reported a very positive impact on program quality. And even though most "product" results (i.e., full cycle student outcomes) have not yet had time to reach fruition, clear and substantial "process" benefits of assessment are being experienced throughout the Network.
2. Everything about assessment takes longer than it should. Whether referring to planning, design, piloting, implementation, analysis and interpretation, evaluation, dissemination, or trouble-shooting, everything we did regarding assessment took longer - and often cost more - than expected. (We continue revising our estimates upward, but haven't gotten completely in synch yet!) Also, when dealing with a consortium, time and cost estimates seem to expand exponentially. Assessment consortium time estimates are, therefore - to understate the case - extremely hard to manage.
3. Even substantial and long-standing barriers to communication and cooperation needn't impede consortial efforts in assessment. With a persistent theme of assessment for educational program enhancement, no hidden political or competitive agendas, strong informational and technical

support, and reinforcement of all good faith assessment efforts, even long-standing patterns of rivalry and mistrust can turn into productive collaborative alliances. The key seems to be combining the points above into an "offer that can't be refused," getting key campus leaders involved, and following through with strong support. As usual, people make the real difference in degree of success, and key SCHEA participants and staff have been great!

4. Most higher educators want assessment, whether they know it or not. Once misperceptions and myths regarding assessment are removed - by accurate information or implementation of high quality methods - most faculty and administrators will be supportive, since they genuinely care about their students and programs, and are willing to put in time and effort once convinced assessment will really help.

5. Some higher educators will oppose assessment, no matter what. Whether due to unshakable biases, resistance to conflicting evidence, perseveration of initial negative attitudes, fear of objective evaluation, suspicions of hidden agendas, lack of concern over program quality and student progress, or other reasons, even the best assessment programs can expect a hard core minority of opposition to remain long after the apparent basis for such opposition has passed. This situation should not dissuade or impede continued assessment progress, and its importance should not be exaggerated.

6. Our last lesson learned is that FIPSE chooses very good people and projects to fund! Most of our useful ideas came from other FIPSE projects, and we've never worked with higher quality people who were more willing to share high quality suggestions. We at SCHEA are very appreciative, and pledge to try to carry on this proud tradition to the best of our abilities.

APPENDICES

G. **Project Director Comments**

I appreciate this opportunity to provide feedback on our experiences as FIPSE grant recipients. Overall, we are grateful for having had the opportunity to work with the FIPSE staff and other grantees for the three years of our project, and were very pleased with most interactions. Our first project officer, Dr. Constance Cook, was very helpful - i.e., informative and supportive. We particularly appreciated her visit to our conference in 1989, and think at least one site visit should be mandatory for all FIPSE officers. Unfortunately, our subsequent project officer, Lewis Greenstein, was not able to make a visit due to conflicts.

We had only three negative experiences which stand out, the first of which was relatively minor; a FIPSE officer who was unskilled and completely unprepared to carry out her leadership responsibilities in a major group exercise at the 1989 FIPSE meeting. The other two were major, at least to us, and certainly made our project continuation efforts much more difficult. Those were: FIPSE's decision to stop making continuation support grants the very year we needed - and had anticipated - the help. (At the very least, some prior notice would have been nice.) And second, the handling - or mishandling - of our request for the Supplemental Grants funds announced in Dr. Karelis' letter of March 20, 1991. Although we responded with three proposal options on April 11, fully three months before the July deadline, we never received any response, assistance, or even formal notification of a decision from FIPSE. Attempts to follow up on our request were

fruitless, since Mr. Greenstein was apparently on leave during this crucial period and no one else was handling our request. When we were able to inquire directly with FIPSE personnel in June at the AAHE Conference, they professed never to have heard of our proposal, and indicated that funding decisions had pretty much been made. Subsequent phone contact with Mr. Greenstein in July brought the response that he "didn't think we'd been funded," with no further explanation or assistance. If we lost out in a fair competition, that's fine; but we were never even given the chance to work up a full proposal, nor discouraged from doing so for just cause. It was very disappointing to end what had been a first-rate relationship on such a poor note.

In terms of suggestions for FIPSE in considering higher education assessment grant proposals in the future, I would offer a couple of suggestions:

- Encourage "efficacy studies" of assessment methods; i.e., good, tight designs testing the validity of measurement options for particular program areas, students, etc. This is probably the most needed type of information for most institutions today, since they're over their "start up" hurdles.
- Encourage assessment consortia, since savings in time, money, and problems can be substantial, and help many institutions for little more than the cost of one.
- Encourage projects that will help consolidate the rapidly proliferating assessment-related laws, regulations, and guidelines from federal, state, and accreditation mandates.

Failing consolidation, support someone (like me?) who will analyze the conflicts, redundancies, compatabilities, and cross-purposes among these various demands, and help chart a course for colleges to follow that will satisfy the letter and intent of assessment mandates without violating standards of valid measurement.